

CHINA

Regional Preparatory Workshop on Inclusive Education

East Asia

Hangzhou, China, 3 – 5 November 2007



The Inclusive Education in China

In 1994, UNESCO held “World Conference on Special Needs Education” in Salamanca, Spain, and passed *Salamanca Statement*, which, for the first time, put forward the concept of “Inclusive Education” formally, and called on all countries to implement inclusive education. Although many countries, including China, had already implemented education which boasts significance same as inclusive education before this conference, the fundamental idea of inclusive education was recognized immediately by each country after this concept was put forward. Many countries have carried out inclusive education whose impact is growing day by day, and have achieved good results.

China has been implementing inclusive education, marked by “special students learning in general school” since in 1980s, and the connotation of inclusive education has been enriched and extended in education practice. Up to now, the emphasis of inclusive education in China’ doesn’t only lie in meeting educational requirements of the disabled people with special education needs, but also in satisfying the needs of all students, who will not be refused by school because of his/her physical, mental, social, emotional, linguistic or other problems related to his/her health. At the same time, inclusive education encourages students to actively

get involved, pays attention to cultivating their teamwork spirit, and meets the requirements of students with different personalities.

I. Compulsory education free of charge guaranteed by state legislation

On September 26th, 2006, the standing committee of the 10th National People's Congress of China revised and approved *Compulsory Education Law of the Peoples Republic of China*, which has been implemented since September 1st. The newly revised *Compulsory Education Law of the Peoples Republic of China* stipulates that the country implements 9-year compulsory education system. Compulsory education is a must to children and youth of the school age, and is a public welfare undertaking a country must guarantee. The law also specifies that no tuition fees and extras shall be charged in the compulsory education. It requires the country to establish a funds guarantee mechanism for compulsory education, so as to ensure the implementation of compulsory education system. As for the object of implementation, *Compulsory Education Law of the Peoples Republic of China* stipulates that children and youth of the right age with nationality of P.R.C, enjoy the equal rights to receive compulsory education and fulfill the obligations when taking compulsory education, regardless of their gender, nationality, race, family's financial status, religious belief and so on.

II. Implement the new fund guarantee mechanism for compulsory education in rural areas

Since the spring semester of 2006, students in the phase of compulsory education in rural areas in West China have been exempted from all tuition fees and extras. This policy had been expanded to rural areas in central and East China in the spring semester of 2007 and then students in the phase of compulsory education in rural areas are all exempted from tuition fees and extras. At the same time, the country continues to provide textbooks free of charge to students with financial difficulties in the phase of compulsory education and provide subsidy for living expense to boarding students. In 2006, the central government and local governments input almost 20.2 billion RMB for "Two Exempt and One Subsidy" (The central government input 9 billion RMB and the local governments 11.2 billion RMB), exempted 52 million primary school and middle school students in rural areas in central and west China from tuition fees and extras, provided textbooks for 37.3 million primary school and middle schools students in rural areas, and provided subsidy for living expense for 7.8 million boarding students with financial difficulties. In 2007 VUP, the central government has arranged 18.1 billion RMB for "Two Exemption and One Subsidy", exempted almost 150 million students in the phase of

compulsory education from tuition fees and extras. The policy of “Two Exemption and One Subsidy” reduced farmers’ burden to a large extent. According to a rough estimation, on average an economic burden of 140-180 RMB is reduced for each primary school student and of 180-230 RMB is reduced for each middle school student per year in central and west China, based only on exemption of extras. As for students with financial difficulties, who receive textbooks free of charge, on average an economic burden of 210-250 RMB is reduced for each primary school student and of 320-370 RMB is reduced for each middle school student per year. As for boarding students who receive both textbooks free of charge and also subsidy for living expenses, on average an economic burden of 510-550 RMB is reduced for each primary school student and of 620-670 RMB is reduced for each middle school student per year. The above measures also serve children of migrant workers from rural areas and of low-income families in urban China. According to the country’s requirements, a group of cities, such as Beijing, have implemented compulsory education free from tuition fees and extras in their districts successively.

In order to further implement and put into effect *Compulsory Education Law of the Peoples Republic of China*, certain departments concerned are studying how to further enlarge the scale

in providing textbooks, to uplift the standard of funds for public use per student, and at the same time, enlarge the scale and improve the standard in providing subsidy for living expenses for boarding students with financial difficulties to a large extent. The implementation of the newly amended *Compulsory Education Law of the Peoples Republic of China*, has already become the most fundamental and strongest guarantee for implementing inclusive education.

III. The country adopts special policies to satisfy education needs of disabled children, female children, migrant children, children with financial difficulties, and so on.

As for disabled children, at present, provinces and cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Shangdong, Liaoning and Jiangsu have exempted disabled students in the phase of compulsory education from extras, fees for textbooks, accommodation fees, and provided certain amount of subsidies for living expenses in the whole province or city (hereinafter referred to as “Two Exemption and One Subsidy” or “Three Exemption and One Subsidy”); The project of using lottery welfare fund to assist education has taken out 60 million RMB to assist the policy of “Two Exemption and One Subsidy” or “Three Exemption and One Subsidy” for 20,000 disabled students in 26 provinces, cities and autonomous regions in

4 years. All those preferential policies for students in the phase of compulsory education formulated by the country should, first of all, serve disabled children. For example, *The Circular on Delivering Special Fund Budget for Providing Textbooks Free of Charge in Autumn of 2004* issued by Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Education in August 2004, clearly states that “primary school students receiving special education in each county” are included in the object for assistance. During “the 11th National Five Year Development Plan”, the central government and local governments will input 600 million RMB altogether, and build around 1150 school for special education in central and west China, so as to fulfill the goal of building 1 independently established comprehensive school (school integrating two or more functions of schools for the blind, schools for the deaf and mute, and schools for mentally retarded children) or unitary school of special education in cities, autonomous regions and prefectures in central and west China, as well as in counties (cities, banners) with a population of more than 300,000 people or with relatively large amount of disabled children and youth. The conditions for school running in those already existing schools of special education have been obviously improved. All the schools of this project have met or basically met the construction standard and equipment requirements issued by the

country for schools of special education, and have basically met the needs of disabled children and youth to receive 9-year compulsory education.

With regard to education for female children, the country has formulated detailed policies and measures to enhance the education for female children in areas mainly resided by ethnic groups and also in impoverished areas. The gap between boys and girls in index like school entry rate in the phase of compulsory education is being narrowed, and even disappears in recent years. Thus, differences in gender are basically eliminated. According to statistics made in 2006, the net school entry rate for children at the age for primary school is 99.27% in the whole country, among which the net school entry rate for girls at the age for primary school is 99.29%, 0.04 percent higher than for boys. Except for very few provinces in west China, gender differences in school entry rate are basically eliminated in most provinces in China.

As for education of floating children, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Public Security formulated *Provisional Measures for Migrant Children's Education* in 1998, and in 2003, General Office of the State Council printed and distributed *Suggestions on Further Improving the Education for Children of Migrant Workers from Rural Areas* formulated by 6 ministries and commissions, such as

Ministry of Education, which clearly states the working principles of the governments in regions where migrant workers pour into from rural areas (hereinafter referred to as governments in regions with pouring workers) that they shall take responsibility in giving children of migrant workers compulsory education, mainly in full-time public primary and middle schools. At present, the problem of providing compulsory education to children of migrant workers is well resolved, and most students are able to study in public primary and middle schools. Conditions in private schools which provide compulsory education to children of migrant workers are also greatly improved.

With regard to education for preschool children, in 2006, there were 130,500 kindergartens in the country, an increase of 4.9%, or 6093 more than the previous year; there were 13.913 million new entrants in the kindergartens, an increase of 2.6%, or 350,000 more than the previous year; there were 22.639 million preschool children in kindergartens, an increase of 3.9%, or 848,000 more than the previous year. In addition, there is a remarkable progress in the spread of the preschool education and the rate of kids who received preschool education among all admitted students by primary schools is continually increasing. The gross rate of kids who have taken preschool education reached 42.5%, which is 1.1% higher than that

of 2005. The rate of kids who had taken preschool education among all students admitted by primary schools reached 84.7%, which is 1.34% higher than that of 2005 and 5% higher than that of 2001.

IV. Establish a “human oriented” children-friendly education model

According to China’s new curriculum reform scheme, Chinese primary and middle schools have universally established a new and equal relationship between teachers and students, which requests teachers to respect the personality of each student and help them to develop in a comprehensive, vivid, vigorous and active way. Respect, appreciation and tolerance have become the main themes of the relationship between teachers and students, which differs a lot from the former teacher-student relationship, regarding of teachers being superior to students. Consequently, the students could enjoy the space for the development of his/her personality in schools. Meanwhile, the country have carried out the idea of inclusive education in training teachers and reforming curriculum, helping teachers to acquire a good sense of professional ethics, improving the relationship between teachers and students, and promoting the implementation of inclusive education. After many years of education all practice, a new relationship between teachers and students has been established, where teachers are equal to students,

not being superior to students, where students fully develop themselves when teachers and students respect, cooperate with and trust each other, and where every student could feel the dignity of independence, as well as the pleasure in the growth of the mind. Some schools are carrying out education practice of “Child-Friendly School” and promoting the establishment of child friendly education model by cooperating with international organizations like UNICEF. The education practice of “Child-Friendly School” is to create a student-oriented environment, which cares about the students in an all round way. This includes creating a most effective learning environment to help students to learn effectively; building a beautiful and healthy campus to make students healthy and help them to form good hygienic habits; creating a safe and comfortable environment in school to help student have a sense of security; creating an atmosphere with no gender or racial discrimination, so as to make students grow up in equality, mutual help, and cooperation; developing a social environment good to teaching and learning, and encouraging communities and families to take part in school running. The practice of “Child-Friendly School” can help students to fulfill their rights of receiving good education, acquire essential knowledge and skills, satisfy their needs for the development of their personalities, promote students to develop themselves and to be both

psychologically and physically healthy. Meanwhile, it guarantees free space for students, which will bring them a sense of security, and protect their initiation and active development.

In 2003, China formulated the Action Plan of Education for All (2002--2015). After years of education practice, the education for all has made great progress in the country with every target achieved upon the plan. In the coming years, based on the implementation of education for all, China will further fulfill the concept of inclusive education, broaden and publicize the idea of inclusive education, implement earnestly “Compulsory Education Law of the Peoples Republic of China” and integrate the content of inclusive education into each aspect of education links, such as cultivation and training of teachers, reform and development of curriculum, establishment and expansion of children friendly schools and improvement of teachers’ teaching attitude and teaching environment. All of these not only enrich and improve the practice of inclusive education in China, but also contribute a lot to the development of inclusive education in the whole world.